

RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT IN SYRIAN CRISIS: WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED FROM THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY?

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ABSTRACT

This article concerns on the notion of responsibility to protect (R2P) in Syrian war and what can be expected from the Muslim community. This theme is important to be discussed for the reasons that crisis in Syria has been occurred for almost nine years since it began in March 2011 and it has no end sign in the immediate time. In addition, it caused hundred thousand civilians dead, million people become displaced persons. In addition, the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian war was against the international laws. This paper was written based on the data that was collected using documentary study. Findings of this research reveals that the Syrian civil war had involved various parties including the government, insurgent groups, international fighters, and several countries like the US, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Russia, some European countries, and other states. This made the situation very complex. The Muslim communities through international organization such as Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) should actively participate in implementing the R2P which include protecting people, promoting human rights issues, and preventing further mass killing as well as military protection.

Keywords: *Responsibility to protect, Syrian civil war, Muslim community, Sunni-Shiite.*

INTRODUCTION

The war in Syria has been prolonged almost nine years which leads to many casualties. Data shows that there are 470,000 people death of February 2016, and around 6.1 million people become internally displaced people (IDP), and approximately 5 million people have been forced to flee from their home land seeking refuge abroad because of the security issues (The United Nations, 2013; Human Right Watch, 2016). Meanwhile, UNHCR mentions that in Syria there are 13.5 people in need, 6.3 million internally displaced persons and 4.7 million people in hard to reach and besieged areas (UNHCR, 2017). Moreover, those huge numbers of the refugees has spread into the neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq (UNHCR,

2013; UNHCR, 2017). The recent data shows that the number of people in need in Syria is still high. UNHCR (2019) mentioned that the number of people in need is 13.1 million, and there are 6.6 million Syrian as internally displaced persons, as well as 2.98 million people in hard to reach and besieged areas (UNHCR, 2019).

Until recently, this crisis has no sign of ending; striking and bombing are still happened in many parts of Syria. In addition, there is a report that some of those strike using chemical weapon. It was reported that on 21 August 2013 there was an attack using chemical weapon toward civilians in the Ghouta area of Damascus (The United Nation, 2013b). Furthermore, it was informed by the Joint Investigative Mechanism between the Organization for the Prohibition

of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nation that in March 2015 the Syrian government forces used chemicals in an attack in Idlib, and in August 2015 Islamic state also known as ISIS employed sulfur mustard gas for attacking areas under armed opposition groups (Human Right Watch, 2017). The chemical weapons were used repeatedly by the Syrian government; it was reported by some media that in 2016 and 2017, there were four times of chemical weapons attack in these areas; Northern Hama (on March 30, 2017), Eastern Hama (on December 11 and 12, 2016), Khan Sheikhoun (on April 4, 2017). The attack occurred in Khan Sheikhoun was caused 92 civilian death including children, and lead hundreds people injured (<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/syria>). On the other hand, the Syrian government repeatedly denied the use of chemical weapons during their strikes. They said that this news is a kind of fabrication.

The incident of chemical weapon attack and the ISIS attack made the situation in Syria worse and added the number of the victims. Considering this occurrence, there are some notions about how the international community including Muslim community around the world should respond to this issue especially to save Syrian people. On the one side, it is mentioned that it is a good way to use the idea of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in Syria to prevent the larger impact on the people (the United Nations, 2013; Global centre for the responsibility to protect, 2013b). The secretary general of the United Nations stated that using chemical weapon is a war crime and violation of the 1925 protocol consisting about the enjoinderment of using these in the warfare; poisonous or other gases that can suffocate people, bacterial weapon and other relevant weapons (The United Nation, 2013b).

In relation to such idea and in response to escalation of the conflict and humanitarian crisis, the United Nations urged the government of Syria to give an access for international agencies to give humanitarian aid. The Security Council mentioned that million Syrian people need immediate humanitarian help; if the Syrian

government insists to not allow the humanitarian intervention, the life of the civilians are at risk (Levs, 2013; the United Nations, 2013b). On the other hand, there is an argument that says such intervention is not the right answer for Syrian case as the idea of responsibility to protect is similar to the military force intervention which will change the existing regime in power (Morris, 2013, 1275). Besides, the Syrian government itself has responsibilities to guard their own people. As Vilmer (2007) mentions that humanitarian intervention is often used by certain country or group to have military intervention into other states without their agreement (Vilmer, 2007: 207).

Although there are debates about the implementation of responsibility to protect in Syria, this essay argues that it is necessary for the international community including Muslim community to take a part in providing protection for civilians from any harm because of war. It is the fact that Syria is a country with the majority of its population is Islam followers; therefore the solidarity among Muslim community is an important part to protect Syrian people. As it is said by the United Nations in 2005 that if a state failed to protect its own citizens, so that international community have responsibility to take collection action to defend those people

The idea of protection will follow the arguments that this protection should be comprehensive; the protection should empower people and local communities so that they can protect themselves later on. Meanwhile there are three approaches for protection namely; protection of rights, humanitarian protection and military protection (Bellamy and Williams, 2010: 344). Furthermore in implementing this R2P, it should follow the principles suggested by the UN Security Council consisting four different key points; (a) the state has responsibility to guard their people from any harm such as mass killing, abuse, threat and other form of human rights violation, (b) international community should help the state to protect the civilians, (c) in order to protect civilians the UN might use all means

including diplomacy, humanitarian intervention, and other nonviolent ways, (d) the UN will approve the intervention on condition that the state cannot provide protection for its citizens (Woodward, 2012: 87; Bellamy, 2013: 487-489).

The underpinning reasons why it is important to apply R2P in Syria as follows; the first, using chemical weapon during the war will endanger people at large and it's against the UN protocol 1925 (the United Nations, 2013b). The second, the main aim of R2P in Syria is to prevent the act of mass killing and to protect citizens; as it is known that the number of victims because of Syrian war is very large; the IDPs and refugees are at alarming as well as there is a large number of human rights violation happened in that country (the United Nations, 2013). The third, it seems that the Syrian government is not able to protect its populations, due to massive scale of killed people (UNHCR, 2013). Therefore, this essay will discuss of this matter, started with the debate and its critique on the idea of R2P and then followed by the discussion of the implementation of R2P in Syrian war and its complexities. Then, what can be done by Muslim community in order to save Syrian people getting out from their worse condition because of war.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies on Syrian war have been conducted by various scholars and many articles have been published either on the academic journal or mass media including online and offline media. Tareq A Hawari (2016) wrote a master thesis entitled "Syrian civil war and the sectarian violence dilemma, a study on the development of the Sunni-Alawite struggle". This writing found that the sectarian conflict involving Sunnis and Shia-Alawites was influenced by pre-conditions such as group myth and ethnic fears. These pre-conditions have intertwined with other variables like mass hostility, chauvinist mobilization and security dilemma.

A writing concerned on the fatwa issued by the Syrian Higher Ifta Council has called boys

and man of Syrian to be enlisted in the army. This fatwa has been discussed by a Syrian ministry of Awqaf during his interview with Damascus Syrian cable television. It is said that the fatwa is aimed to stimulate people to be involved in the Syrian army for defending their homeland. This fatwa leads to debate whether it can be applied or not, since Syria is a secular country, but at the same time they are not irreligious. Therefore, it is argued that this fatwa is actually an attempt to prevent from the bloodshed of the people and to protect Syria from invasion, since it is the fact that many nations intend to attack Syria (Anonymous, 2013: 2-4).

In the historical aspect, there is a study on how the Syrian immigrants shaped their identity during the inter-war 1920-1940. A thesis written by Johanna L. Peterson (2011) focuses on how these immigrants living in the United State of America understood their identity and how they tried to maintain their culture. This study examines those important aspects through memoir, biography, and oral history. This research found that upon arriving in America, Syrian immigrants faces various ideologies and images. Media outlets and films in the United States are mostly portrayed them in the stereotypical and romanticized ways. This study also found that how those people encountered with the American help them create their identity, as some faces rejection and acceptance.

A similar thesis on how Syrian refugees cope with the "new" place especially the religious coping strategy was written by Nabiha Hasan (2016). This thesis focused on the role of religion for the life of refugees who settled in Dalas the United State. This study found that all refugees participated in this research mention they have experienced hardship during the war in Syria and they relied on their religion to deal with these challenges. In this sense, a religion plays as a means of coping and seeking hope in any hard situation. This study also found that a religion plays as a resilience factor for the refugees. The writer also mentioned that these people faced some challenges in adapting a new place; these

include culture shock and adjustment to “new” American style of life. As a minority group, the Syrian refugees might face some stereotypical from others, since they are different from the majority people living there, for instance they use different language and dress, they have different lifestyle and religion, and other aspects of life (Hasan, 2016).

A study on how the Western media translated and narrated the Syrian Humanitarian Disaster is conducted by Fadi Jaber (2016). He examined two media namely the *New York Times* and *The Guardian* on how they narrated the news of what happened in Syria during its crisis from March 2011 – February 2014. The narration and translation are important elements to be discussed since this is one of the ways to deliver news, how its accuracy and objectivity become significant factor in portraying major international events to the world. At the same time, the ethical aspect becomes a pivotal aspect to be considered by the journalists too in which they are representing the others. There are 326 news text consisting of 177 news text from *the Guardian* and 149 news text from *the New York Times* that are examined in this study. The Guardian narrated the Syrian regime has made its citizens’ suffering. This Syrian regime has been depicted as a brutal where the Syrian armies shoot people viciously. On the other hand, Syrian refugees are narrated as the victims of such brutality. Meanwhile, the New York Times narrated the human loss and damage during the Syrian force strikes. This media also covers the ethnic tension between Alawites and Shiites (Jaber, 2016: 74-78). Meanwhile, the extended war occurred in Syria has inevitably affected the neighboring countries including the influx of refugees who crossed the border to the nearby states, the geopolitical and security issues as well as economic aspect. A thesis written by Alaa Tarshishi (2015) explores on how such war has affected Lebanon as a neighboring state. Lebanon is well known as a fragile country with long history of conflict.

The discussion of responsibility to protect had started since many years ago. Several

scholars have talked about it in their writings. For example, Weiss (2011) stated in his article that the idea of R2P has become a framework to stop mass killing with the three principles namely; to prevent, to react, and to rebuild. After the Libya, military force had been replaced with the scholars, diplomat, and policy analyst. He further mentioned that the use of R2P in Libya was a turning point whether this concept was success as a robust and effective international way to protect civilians, or it would fail. If it failed, then it would be a backfire for the R2P and more critics will be addressed toward it (Weiss, 2011: 287). Meanwhile Bailey (2013) wrote a paper entitled “the Responsibility to protect doctrine: Syria 2014.” This writing explores more on how the United States should contribute in making peace and protecting innocent civilians from the genocide

The notion of R2P was also discussed by Bellamy (2014), he wrote an article with a subject “From Tripoli to Damascus? Lesson learning and the implementation of the responsibility to protect.” This paper talked about how the R2P was failure to response in Syria in relation with the previously controversy occurred in Libya because of political disagreement of NATO-led intervention in that state. The supporting arguments for this matter are; firstly, the explanation of Russia and China on their position is inconsistent in accentuating what happened in Libya. Secondly, many countries that were critical on the NATO-led action in Libya supported for the resolution draft on Syria, did not classify Libya case as having effects. Thirdly, the Security Council and General Assembly were failure to draw line between Syria and Libya in implementing R2P in time during 2011-2012 (Bellamy, 2014: 23, 42). Similarly, Nuruzzaman (2013) argued that the doctrine of R2P in Syria was not successfully implemented immediately that it is because of NATO intervention in Libya. The military strike of NATO in Libya under the UN Security Council 1973 was claimed as part of R2P doctrine, as if it was a success of R2P when NATO was successfully defeating Ghadafi regime.

The literature on Syrian crisis and responsibility to protect as above mentioned are mainly concerning on the refugees, the sectarian aspect of the war, and the critic toward implementation of R2P in Libya and Syria. There is no writing on how the Muslim community dealing with the war in Syria using R2P principles. Therefore this article focuses on this theme that will fill the gap and provide some insight through the discussion on how the R2P should be implemented in Syria in order to protect civilians, to provide human rights and to deter further bloodshed.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This article mainly used the idea of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as a proposal to deal with the issue of civil war in Syria. Although there are many debates among scholars regarding the idea of responsibility to protect (R2P) and its implementation, this notion has been implemented in many countries with the conflicts. This R2P was employed by the United Nation (The UN) as a diplomatic strategy and humanitarian intervention in several countries, for instance in Sudan-Darfur (2003-ongoing), Kenya (2007-2008), Sri Lanka (2008-2009), Democratic Republic of Congo (ongoing), and North Korea (ongoing) (Bellamy, 2010: 148-149). In addition, R2P also used by other parties in dealing with conflict and humanitarian crisis, for example, in 2018 the government of Georgia (2008) commenced military attack in South Osetia. This act was proposed to restore “constitutional order”. In this case, Russia invoked R2P as they argued that there was genocide in this conflict. The use of R2P in this case had been debated since there was no approval from the UN. In 2008 France and some NGO advocates used R2P when they made humanitarian intervention in Myanmar during the Cyclone Nargis disaster.

Before looking the debate of R2P deeply, it is better to know the originality of this R2P. As it is known that the notion of responsibility to protect stems from the spirit of protecting civilian from

the genocide and preventing other countries have similar experiences like Rwanda and Kosovo’s cases, this idea was originally proposed by the Canadian-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). Then, this concept was adopted by the United Nation (UN) to encourage its member state to participate in the peace and humanitarian operation through the UN peacekeeper mission in which it aims to protect people from any harm during the war like atrocities, assault, offence and abduction (Morris, 2013: 1269-1270). The idea of R2P was endorsed by the UN in 2005 when the Security Council selected a special adviser relating to this matter who will work to prevent massacre. Furthermore, the regional security organization like the African Union (AU) has also used the notion of R2P; the article 4(h) of the AU’s constitutive act stated that the member state of the AU will have permission to have access in the AU’s countries in handling the issues of genocide and mass killing, the example of this is the AU mission in Sudan that the mandate consisted of the civilian protection (Bellamy and William, 2010: 343-345).

Providing protection to the civilians in the conflict areas is as important as giving aid to them. This is because delivering aid without considering their safety is like “well fed dead Syndrome” in which people were given food, health care and shelter by humanitarian actors, but then they will be killed by the warlords; for instance the case of Rwanda, Bosnia, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and other places (Bellamy and William, 2010: 342). R2P is not merely another name for humanitarian intervention, since these two have different concepts. The humanitarian interference is usually defined as coercive military intervention for the humanitarian aims (Evans, 2008: 290). Similarly, Pape (2012) defines that humanitarian intervention is “the use of military force by one or more states within the jurisdiction of another, without its permission, to protect innocent people from violence by the target state’s government” (Pape, 2012: 5). On the other hand, R2P is much more than such definition; it is an effective

preventive way to deter further mass atrocities. This action is ideally implemented at the earliest stage of the conflict where the genocide has not happened yet and the country is in a struggle situation. Thus, without external help, the state condition will experience deterioration (Evans, 2008: 290).

The R2P consist of three elements namely; responsibility to prevent, responsibility to protect and responsibility to rebuild. The first aspect is dealing with the core causes of the condition that lead people suffering, so that the international community should solve this problem in the first place. Secondly, if the first attempt does not success, then it is necessary to take further action including the coercive one. The last, after the military intervention, it is important to rebuild the condition by giving assistance in recovery and reconstruction as well as reconciliation process (Sidahmed and Soderlund and Briggs, 2010: 13).

In addition to that good idea of the R2P, there are many critiques toward this notion. One of the critiques on the implementation of the R2P is the interest of the participating countries toward the receiving aid country. For example, the intention of the coalition states lead by the US on the Iraq war in 2003 is assumed not as merely as the humanitarian mission, but they are presumed as having their own interests. This 48 countries collaboration seemed to have objectives to win the political and economical benefit from their mission (Vilmer, 2007: 210). However, to deal with this issue the ICISS argues that the intervening countries should follow the criterion in which they have to guarantee the right intention (Vilmer, 2007: 211). Besides, if there is a military intervention in such war state, they should follow the precautionary principles including these aspects; (a) right intention means that whatever the country's motives, their main objectives of their intervention is to relieve human's suffering through the multilateral missions, (b) Military intervention is the last option, after all non-military effort had been used and there are no good results from those attempts, (c) Proportional ways; the armed intervention should

be implemented in the minimum way which is aimed only for securing civilians, (d) reasonable prospect; it means that the mission should lead to a better condition compared to the situation if there is no such interventions (Newman, 2009: 194).

Although not all military intervention were successful totally, some of them did improve the condition of people's live such as the armed intervention in Liberia, East Timor and Bosnia (Reed, 2013: 188). In East Timor, international force operation (INTERFET) from 1999 to 2000 had chapter VII mandate to re-establish peace and security as well as to assist humanitarian mission. This operation was success in preventing another massacre in that conflict area (Findlay, 2002: 288-289). Meanwhile, in Bosnia the UN peace operation (UNPROFOR) was success in using force in order to protect civilians and assisting the humanitarian mission (Findlay, 2002: 220-221). Following the utilitarian paradigm, this military intervention is justifiable on condition that there are conditions which can potentially endanger the human security. Meanwhile, those threats include the lack of basic need for people at massive scale and it was happened continuously (Heinze, 2006: 289-290). The example of the use of force along with the implementation of R2P is the case of Libya. The UN Security Council adopted the resolution 1973 for protecting population from the act of genocides (Bellamy, 2013: 499).

Another important critical review on this matter is the use of the term "humanitarian intervention". In this sense, the concept of "intervention" is considered as a bad term or euphemism of another worse word "colonialism". For example, the humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in 1999 done by NATO was more likely as "three months of bombing" rather than humanitarian mission (Thakur, 2013: 65; Newman, 2009: 189). On the other hand, the R2P is slightly different from this view in which the main emphasize of the R2P is to place people's need and interest as priority rather than the need of interveners (Bellamy, 2013: 488; Thakur, 2013: 65). The emphasis is not on the territorial issue

but on the human security where people are able to access food, employment, and environmental security. Furthermore, people should have access these elements; livelihood, health care, human safety and dignity (Newman, 2009: 190).

The next debate of the R2P is the issue of sovereignty. This critique mentions that the R2P is risky and it will threaten the state independency since applying R2P is similar to the implementation of the colonialist principles. This is because it is hard to apply the principles of R2P consistently in the real life, for example the case of France in Myanmar and Russia in Georgia, both countries seemed to use R2P to justify their military power although there is no indication of genocide in those conflict areas. Other examples are in Somalia and Afghanistan in which the government did not apply the principles of R2P (Bellamy, 2010: 144; Bruce, 2007: 19). In response to the notion of sovereignty, there is a good argument given by Francis Deng (1996) as quoted by Bellamy (2013); he said that in the idea of sovereignty the government has responsibility to protect their own citizen and make sure that they improve the living condition of their population. To do this job, a state can work on its own or work with the international community. In other word "sovereignty" is a kind of state's responsibility (Bellamy, 2013: 490). The primary source of protection toward people's live should be provided by the government, but if the state could not offer that function, then the external element can come to fill this mission (Newman, 2009: 191; Sidahmed and Soderlund and Briggs, 2010: 13). In relation to this, the R2P tries to bridge the gap between the sovereignty and the human rights issues in which the main concern is to protect people in danger situation (Bellamy, 2013: 491).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative case study on the issue of Syrian crisis and how the idea of responsibility to protect should be implemented in order to protect civilian from any harm because

of war. Case study is a method emphasizing on identifying data deeply and examining the background of the selected cases. By using a case study, it gives chance to researcher to develop theory or to make inference from the phenomena under study (George and Bennet, 2005: 19-20). Data was collected using documentary research such as examining books, Journal articles, reports from the International NGO, report from the UN and other reports from related agencies and stakeholders. Then, the collected data was analyzed using perspective of responsibility to protect offered by many scholars as described in the next part.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Syrian Civil War and the Death Toll

Syrian war have been prolonged for almost nine years since it was started in the mid of March 2011. Initially it was prompted by protests in Damascus and Aleppo demanding for the release of political prisoner, democratic reform, and greater liberty for people. In the beginning this demonstration run peacefully, however this protest was responded by the National security in "the wrong way". The next few months in 2011 onward the ruling government lead by the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was reluctant to stop attacking protesters and hesitant to implement the demanded reformation. For instance, in March, 18, 2011 security force used fire to halt protesters in Dara; this action killed four people and it was said as the first death of the unrest. The death of those protesters had triggered wider violent uprising and spread over the nation. Then, in April 2011 the Security Force attack a city of Homs, the third largest of Syrian town, in which thousands of protesters gathered at Tahrir Square.

In June 2011 it was said that there are police and army joining the protesters and asked to shoot them, and it was also mentioned that protesters claimed control over the city, however within days the government arms accompanied by heavy military tools such helicopters and tank had took

over the city. A month later, it was reported that arm force had coerced people to arbitrary detention and using torture. During this time, the Syrian president denied the responsibility of this act and refused humanitarian activists to help civilian in need in this conflict area. Thus, there is a lack of assistance from the humanitarian agency such as from Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and the UN in order to provide food, water and other basic amenities.

There is also a report mentioned that in June 2011, the conflict reached a new dimension in which there were terrorist groups, particularly refer to religious extremists, and joined in the violence. These groups are reported attacking government building and police centre in Idlib (Janik, 2013: 65). During this month, there were significant increase in attack against state forces in many places, like in Homs, Hama and Idlib (Janik, 2013: 65). Regarding this matter, President Bashar Assad mentioned that not all people demanding for political change acted in peaceful manner (Janik, 2013: 63)

The peaceful protest in Dara, then started to escalate and spread to other areas in the country involving massive people. After the government forced the demonstration using open fire, the people then demand the President Bashar al-Assad steps down from the power. However, he refused it which made protesters extremely angry. The conflict has continued until now (in 2019) and it has no sign to end immediately. The war has become complicated since many groups and countries have involved in the battlefield, either supporting the regime or supporting the rebels. The groups against the government or called as opposition or rebels are not single group, there are many of them. To name some of them are; rebel fighters, political parties who opposed to Bashar Al Assad, people living in exile who cannot return to Syria (Bbc.co.uk, 2018). Furthermore, countries supporting the Syrian government are Russia and Iran, while countries supporting the rebels are the US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, other countries such as the UK, France and other western countries have

backed to “moderate” rebels by providing some supports.

Conflict in Syria becomes one of the deadliest wars in this era which caused hundred thousand people dead, million people lost their properties and forced to flee to other areas as internally displaced persons or refugees. As previously discussed that this war has caused 470,000 people lost their life as of 2016, and hundred thousands of children lost their parents and unable to go to their schools because the schools were destroyed, and in the refugees camp where they move there is no education facilities and no teachers. Bombing and chemical weapons strikes are attacking not only armies' base but also civilians. As it is reported in September 2017 by the UN-Appointed commission of inquiry mentioned that the Syrian air force dropped Sarin using a Sukhoi SU-22 aircraft in Khan Sheikhoun and Idlib that caused dozens people died in which most of them are women and children. In addition, the Human Right Watch (2018) also stated that the Syrian government helicopters were dropping chlorine at least eight times during their strike to takeover Aleppo, thus it was evidence that chemical weapons were used in this conflict (Human Right Watch, 2018).

Human Right Watch (2018) also reported that the US coalition airstrike in March 2017 had killed 38 civilians who were attending evening prayer at a mosque in al Jinah village in Aleppo. The US statement mentioned that they targeted a meeting of al-Qaeda members; they did an investigation on this matter and found it was legal, but they failed to clarify and to understand the targeted building was a mosque. Regarding this matter, on the other hand, The UN Commission of Inquiry stated that the US did unlawful strike and failed to minimize the civilian casualties. Furthermore, the coalition airplane attacked close to Raqqa Syria had lead 84 civilians death including 30 of them were children. In addition, a report issued by a Syrian Observatory for Human Rights declared that there were about 1,100 civilians dead because of airplane attacked by

coalition since the campaign to take over Raqqa started. This matter lead to a question that the US-led coalition during their attack against extremist armed group Islamic state did not take enough preventative measure to minimize the death of civilians (Human Right Watch, 2018).

The non-state armed groups are continued to fight against the government and within opposition groups which also caused thousands people loss their life. A coalition of Jabhat Fateh al Sham, formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, with other factions made a group named Hay'et Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) which it then becomes a major group in Idlib Province. This group was reported using violence against people who protested over HTS' control in Idlib, even they killed and injured civilians. Besides, they obstructed the humanitarian aid delivery. Even, this group attacked religious minority as they used two cars bombing at Bab al- Saghir cemetery, known as Shia pilgrimage site. This explosion caused 44 residents including 8 children passed away and injured 120 people (Human Right Watch, 2018; Human Right Watch, 2019). Furthermore, Islamic State or ISIS has continued their fighting against the ruling party and abusing civilians. They attacked Aqarib al-Safiyah town in May 2018 which was mostly occupied by Ismailis, a minority of Shia community. The Ismailis' people were shoot death by ISIS snipers during their attempt to escape from their village. There were 52 residents including 12 children dead, and 100 people wounded. In addition, ISIS used civilians as human shield for their defense of Raqqa and other cities (Human Right Watch, 2019).

Abuses by non state armed actors are continued either by killing, torturing, or kidnapping civilians. Between February and April 2018, various groups in Ghouta like Jaysh al Islam, Ahrar al-Sham, and Faylaq al Rahmane murdered hundred people in Damascus during their random attack. In addition, those armed groups are often captured and persecuted residents in Douma including people from minority religious groups (Human Right Watch, 2019). Meanwhile, HTS continued arresting and

kidnapping targeted political opponents and journalist, killing and car bombing as well as blocking humanitarian aid delivery in the areas under HTS control. Moreover, on 25 July 2018, ISIS continued attacking al Suweida governorate, assassinating 200 people and abducting 27 persons. In addition, ISIS killed one hostage in November 2018, and there is no certain information on the remaining people kidnapped by ISIS in the east of Syria (Human Right Watch, 2019).

The Syrian Network for human rights (2019) reported that during 2018 there were 6,964 civilians were killed by main parties in the Syrian war, with the distribution based on the perpetrator, as follows; (a) 4,162 (59.76 %) people death at the hand of Syrian regime and Iranian militias, (b) 1,107 (15.90%) people dead by other parties, (c) 478 (6.86%) civilians death by extremis Islamist groups, (d) Russian force killed 567 (6.71%) residents, (e) 417 (5.99%) civilians death at the hand of International Coalition forces, (f) Kurdish Self Management forces (mainly PYD) murdered 285 people, and (g) Factions of the armed opposition killed 48 civilians. From those numbers of victims, 1,436 were children and 1,361 were female (The Syrian Network for human rights, 2019).

The mass killing is still happening in the year 2019. On March 2019 there were 90 people killed whom almost half of them were children, and about 86,000 people are displaced because of the newest violence increase, public services like hospital and schools in Saraqeb city was destroyed (The United Nations, 2019). On October 2019, it was reported that a missile attack hit a hospital in Idlib where the area is under Syria insurgents' control. This caused seven people injured who one of them was in critical condition. In this hospital, there were 60 patient including children when the attack occurred. This government strike indicated that they did not make preventative measure on the casualties, as the civilians become victims of such attack. Furthermore, the four months long of battles in 2019 had caused 1,000 residents death (Aljazera, 2019).

Religion and the Complexity of Fighters in the Syrian Battle field

Syria is not single entity in terms of religions and ethnicities, Majority of them are Muslim with most of them are Sunni, and the rest are Syiite-twelver and Alawitie as well as Druze as the minority group. In this sense, Druze is considered as a monotheistic religion combining of three Abrahamic faiths; Islam-Judaism and Christianity, in which it has two variants namely Ismailism and Yazidiism. Another source said that Druze is originally coming from Islam, especially from Syiite-Ismailism, which is also influenced by Greek Philosophy and Christianity as well as Judaism. Although it comes from Islam, the Druze followers do not perform all five pillars of Islam; they do not fast during Ramadhan and pilgrimage to Mecca; they incorporate some other faiths in their belief system. Druze followers are mostly lived in Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Syria (Manfreda, 2017; Cultural atlas.sbs.com, accessed 2019).

Furthermore, the second largest population in Syria are belong to Christian at about 10 % out of the total population, in which they consist of different kind of denomination including Syrian orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Greek Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Protestants, Copt, Maronite Church, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Catholic, Chaldean Catolics Church, and Roman Catholic. Moreover, Syria is also a home for small numbers of Jews followers. Data from the CIA world fact book as cited by the Cultural atlas mentioned that in 2016 the total population in Syria was 17,185,170 consisting of 87 % of Syrian Muslim (74% out of the total Muslim are Sunni, and 13 % are Shi'a Muslim, 11 % are Alawite, 1 % are Ismaili, and 0.5 % Twelver Imami sect). Meanwhile, the Christian made up 10 % of the Syrian population, and 3 % of the rest population are combination of Druze, Jews and Atheists (Cultural atlas.sbs.com, accessed 2019).

Syria is also a home for people from different ethnic groups, majority of them are identified as Arab (90%), meanwhile others are Kurds,

Armenians, Greeks, Assyrian, Circassians, Mamdeans and Turkomen. In term of its culture, Syria is said as a country where its people have loyalty to their family, their ethnic and their social group. They tend to help their friend and their family, at the same time they will expect that they will get help in return when they are needed. For many years, Syrian people enjoyed the multi culture society and live with people with different background of religion and ethnicity. However, after the civil war brook out, the multicultural society is disappearing, they are divided into fractions, and some of them are forced to exile, flee to other regions as displaced people, as well as escape to other countries seeking a safe place as refugees.

As a country, Syria with majority people are Muslim-Sunni, lead by Bashar al Assad who is well known as Alawite follower. This becomes a unique nation in which Muslim-Sunni majority is lead by a president coming from a minority group. Assad family has taken in reign since 1970, Hafez al Assad, the father of Bashar al Assad took place as a president in 1971 until his death in 2000. Then, on July 2000 Bashar al Assad replaced his father as president of Syria through election. In 2007 and in 2014, Bashar al Assad was re-elected as president. Although, Syria is regarded as a nation helmed by a secular regime, many Syrian people think that Alawites gained advantages like privilege access to top government position, and business chances. Furthermore, President Assad was considered as an authoritarian, repressive and corrupt leader. That is why the protest against Assad regime, during the Arab Spring in 2011, initially demanded democratic reform, appealing for releasing political prisoners and multiparty elections (Manfreda, 2017; Cultural atlas.sbs.com, Accessed 2019).

Although Syria has many adherents of various religions, Islam has always been national security issue for the government. Many Syrian public servants are affiliated with the Sunni institutions. In addition, the government monitored the religious activities through the security figures associated with the presidential palace in

cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Endowments. Moreover, the government through those security officials selected most of the senior leaders from the main religious institutions to local imams. The government was also determined the education curricula. Thus, before the uprising occurred in the country, the state controlled almost all the religious hierarchy and doctrines. The state control was also seen on how the regime managing the funding and ownership of religious institutions (Khaddour, 2019). In the past, the government controlled thousands mosques as well; for instance in 1992 the state through the Ministry of Religious Endowments supervised 5,000 mosques (Khaddour, 2019). Likewise, the Ministry of Religious Endowment had owned the largest mosques in most of the main cities. These types of mosques are usually funded by wealthy Syrian people and donation, but before the construction of the building they have to submit registration to the government and forming a committee which is strictly controlled by that Ministry of Religious Endowment (Khaddour, 2019). This then changed along with the changing of situation in the country, by the time of uprising began mosques played not only as a place of worship but also as a meeting point for the protesters. This is because young people felt more secure protesting around mosque; meanwhile the imam of such mosque will be the spokesperson for the community when it is needed. The State control on religions had reduced, in contrast the local figures and families had increasingly influenced on the religions (Khaddour, 2019).

In the beginning, the Syrian civil war was not related with religions and some people think that religion had only small contribution on such conflict. However, that minor role of religion becomes an important factor leading the war into "overtly sectarian". In some areas where there are various religious communities, they positioned themselves as the opposition against the government of Bashar al Assad (United Nation report, 2012). On the other hand, the majority of Alawites supported the government since they are afraid of discrimination if the Sunni will take

over the power. But there are some of the Alawite leaders mentioned that they are independent and not supporting the Assad regime.

People from different religions have divided into various groups either as supporters or against the government. Some of those factions operated in the Syrian civil war are; (a) the government lead by Abbas, coming from the Alawite and supported by Alawite followers, (b) Free Syrian Army with the most members coming from the Sunni Arabs, this is opposition group against the Abbas regime, (c) Salafi jihadists group, including al-Nusra front, (d) ISIS, with support from people coming from various countries by either directly involving in the warzone, or providing material support, (e) the mixed Kurdish-Arab Syrian Democratic forces (SDF). Furthermore, although many people said that the conflict in Syria is between Alawites and Sunni, the reality in the field is much more complicated since it is the fact that most of the regular government armies are Sunni recruits. In addition, some Sunni also hold high governmental position, have important position on the business community and hold significant position on the ruling Baath Party.

Another source reveals that the factions who are fighting each other in Syria can be categorized into three groups namely (a) armies supporting the Bashar al Assad regime, (b) rebels fighting the Assad regime who want Assad to step down from his presidential position, (c) Islamic State (also known as ISIS). In addition, the oppositions who want President Assad to step down are not single entity, this consists of several kind of people including rebels, political party who oppose with Assad, and people living in exile who are unable to return to the country.

Moreover, the dispute has also involved many countries who support either the government or the rebels. Many powerful countries like the US, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, and some European countries are known to be involved in the Syrian war. This fact made the situation worse. The Assad regime is backed up by Russia and Iran. Meanwhile the US supports the rebels

fighting the regime. On the other hand, Turkey has played a complex role in the Syrian war. They are a U.S ally and as supporter of the rebels, however recently they work with the Assad government along with Russia and Iran. Turkey was also part of the US coalition against the Islamic State (Carey et.al, 2019).

Islamic State or ISIS joined the battle against President Assad in 2011 as they see Syria as a safe haven for them and a place to get weapons easily. ISIS is a militant group supported by jihadists coming from various countries. They are not reluctant using violence to anyone who opposes them, as they had killed other groups including Christian and Yazidis. In 2014 ISIS had occupied large area in Iraq, a neighboring country of Syria. Besides, in the early of 2014, this group also took over some areas in Syria like Raqqa and Aleppo, as well as an area along the Turkish border (Carey et.al, 2019).

Furthermore, a report written by Ghadi Sary (2015) mentioned that at the end of 2012 jihadist groups had secured territory. This article explained that the Islamist groups in Syria can be differentiated by their objectives, the people, and source of their funding. Most of those groups are Syrian like Ahrar al-Sham and Jays Al Islam, and others are international groups such as ISIS and the Nusra Front - an al-Qaeda' affiliate existed in Syria. Moreover, the main opposition groups against Assad regime by mid 2014 are the FSA, Islamist Syrian rebel groups, and international jihadists groups (Sary, 2015). The difference of those groups in terms of aims and ideology had made them fighting within opposition. Then, in the mid of 2015, the opposition backer consisting of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar were created a group named Jaish al-Fateh (the Army of Conquest) as the umbrella of opposition groups including Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham. This group was successfully contesting areas from the government and the expansion of Islamic State (Sary, 2015).

The complexity of fighters and backers in the Syrian war had continued until recently, as some

countries are still involved in the conflict, and some groups are still fighting each others. Now, the battle is not merely against the government, but it is also warfare within oppositions. For instance the US, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia are still supported either the government or the rebels, but at the same time they both fighting against ISIS. Russia and Iran, for example, are supporting the Assad regime, while The US, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are supporting the rebels named Free Syrian Army, however all those countries are also fighting against Islamic State. Meanwhile, the US supports YPG (Kurdish People's Protection Unit), but Turkey considered YPG as a terrorist group (Greene, 2018).

Responsibility to Protect in Syria and the Role of Muslim Community

The Muslim world was criticized that they failed in dealing with the crisis in Syria since innocent people are continued to be slaughtered, and hundred thousand civilians are still living as displaced people with minimum facilities and hard to get to the basic needs. For instance, Iftikhar (2016) mentioned in his article that Muslim communities in the world let the innocent Syrian people down in many ways, as Syrian people continue to be killed in Aleppo and several other cities in Syria. Although many international organizations such as the UN did humanitarian aid and tried several actions to protect civilians, the International Muslim organizations like the Arab League and Organization for Islamic Cooperation were failed to mobilize 57 Muslim-majority countries to address the Syrian conflict (Iftikhar, 2016). This article further mentioned that the wealthy Arab states are mostly rejecting Syrian refugees. In addition, Iran and Saudi Arabia see the Syrian conflict as the staging place for proxy war between Sunni and Shiite (Iftikhar, 2016). Similarly, an article written by Hamrah (2014) mentioned that Saudi Arabia and Iran are waging the proxy war between those two sectarian groups in which the Sunni-insurgent groups are backed by Sunni Arab state, while the Alawite regime is supported by Shiite-Iran.

Conflict between Sunni and Shiite is actually not a new phenomenon; they were previously having “long ill fate” relationships since many years ago. Historically, it was dated back to the event that was happened in the year of 632 and 656, after the Prophet Muhammad passed away. Shiite was originally from the faction who devoted to Ali, a Muhammad’s cousin and son in law, he contended unsuccessfully to Abu Bakr, Muhammad’s father in law, for the position of newly caliph replacing Muhammad. In the next following years the disagreement over the succession between Sunni and Shiite continued, and it was deepen (Ryan, 2013: 16). This has influenced on the Arab world including in Syria today where Shiite and Sunni Muslim becomes divided communities. The history of Syria reveals that in the early 1900s, the Ottoman-supported by Sunni majority took place in reign. Then, in the late 1966 Alawite minority group took over the power through military coup, after the birth of Baath party in 1947 which fortified the political position of Alawite. In 1970, the air force commander and Defense Minister General Hafez al-Assad lead a bloodless military coup that he ended come to power as president in 1971. He had capability managing the Alawite sect, making networks with Druz, Christian, Sunni army and business elites which supporting him into power (Buckley, 2012: 90). Furthermore, the regime in Syria is continued by the Assad family until now who is with the Alawite background. The conflict in Syria, as previously discussed, is then more likely as a sectarian clash between those sects

The complexity of Syrian situation should be taken into consideration when proposing a way out to solve the crisis. Many reports and suggestion had been given by several organizations and several scholars to deal with such long disputes. The first important thing to be noted is international community including Muslim countries should try to protect innocent people from genocide and human rights violations as well as war crimes. This is in accord with the 1948 Convention on the prevention of the crime of genocide which stated genocide is a crime according the international

law. Moreover, the Convention Against Torture (CAT) article 16 mentions that obligates state to undertake to prevent other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment which do not amount of torture.

The Muslim community through international organization like Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has to take actions in dealing with the crisis in Syria. As it is known that OIC has 57 countries members whom several of them are closed neighboring countries of Syria such as Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Besides, OIC will have power to drive it members participating in protecting civilians from further atrocities. OIC has made fixed posturing regarding Syrian war as it is shown in its website. OIC made clear position in which they condemned on what happening in the battlefield of Syria, rejected and disagreed with the use of chemical weapons. They mentioned that they did not abandon Syria and tried protecting civilians. Along with other International organization like the UN and as a member of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), the OIC actively attempted to solve the problems to end the bloodsheds and to reach political solution through negotiation (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2019).

The OIC and the ISSG should continue their efforts in dealing with the Syrian crisis by using R2P principles. Although to implement the idea of responsibility to protect (R2P) in certain country including in Syria is not an essay task due to the fact that there are several countries having interest toward crisis in Syria. Besides, there are many different international responses on the Syrian war; China and Russia insist their arguments on respecting sovereignty of the state and its territory which means that letting Syria solve their own problems and maintaining non interference from the international in such community including military and its related aspects (Morris, 2013: 1274-1275). In this case, Russia is closely related with the president Assad and as the supporter of the regime to win the war. China and Russia argued that the resolution 1973 will drive Syria into civil war; external power

should not intervene into Syrian domestic affairs, and both conflicting parties should receive the sentence because of their action namely violation of human rights (Thakur, 2013: 71). On the other hand, India and South Africa suggest that the UN Security Council has to solve the internal disagreement. The position of India is in relation with its interest for not opposing the Six Middle East countries including Saudi Arabia, in which almost six million people from India work and live in that country. Meanwhile, Brazil tend to accommodate the resolution, they acknowledged the fail of the draft resolution 2011 in which this resolution were not able to punish the perpetrator of violence and it also failed to facilitate the government and the opposing groups to have peaceful way out (Thakur, 2013: 71).

Aside from those difference responses, the crisis in Syria still continues until now and the number of massacre is still high. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported in January 2013 that from March 2012 to November 2012 there were 59,648 killing. This report added the previous data which exposed the 26,906 of people killed during December 2012 to April 2013. In addition, there were another data from the Syrian centre for Statistic and Research said that there were 3,391 death people from March 2011 and November 2012, adding the existing document since this number was initially unrecorded (Price et al , 2013: 3). This condition become worse after the chemical weapons attack on 21 August 2013 due to the fact that this attack caused thousands people died (The United Nations, 2013). By February of 2016, the number of death increase to 470,000 people. Moreover, the massacre continued until 2019 in which the casualties remained high as previously discussed.

That situation needs effective responses from the international actors especially to deal with the humanitarian issues and to protect civilians. Even, there is argument that it is necessary to take military intervention if the mass atrocities continue. A peace conference chaired by the US and Russia came up with these results; the US will provide military aid to the opposition group.

Then, other countries including United Kingdom, France and Germany will also give support to the “rebel” group (Global centre for the responsibility to protect, 2013b). Regarding this matter, on 27 September 2013 the UN Security Council produced a resolution 2118 for Syrian crisis. It mentions that considering the destruction caused by the chemical weapons attack and this action break the term and rules made by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical weapons, the UN is going to use chapter VII mandate for mission in Syria (the United Nation, 2013c). According to this resolution, the use of chemical weapons is violation of international law and will threaten the international security. The UN Security Council asked Syrian government to protect their civilians and encourage all parties in Syria to facilitate the UN and other humanitarian actors in providing humanitarian assistance for Syrian people (the United Nation, 2013; Global centre for the responsibility to protect, 2013).

One of the solutions to deal with the Syrian crisis is applying the R2P in order to protect civilians and empower people as previously discussed. This will include three aspects namely; the first is protection of rights; in this part the protection is aimed to ensure the rights of individual in agreement with the existing law like refugee’s law and international law (Bellamy, 2013: 345). In this sense, the idea of this R2P is closely related to the notion of shared responsibility; how global community contribute to promote human rights to people around the world as it is known that human rights is a borderless issue and as one of the concerns of international community. Thus, this task should not only be entrusted to the state but also to other actors who have capabilities to do it effectively (Fabri, 2008: 85).

The next is humanitarian protection for Syrian people; this focus on the prevention and analyzing the effect of the conflict, so that people will free from the violence including rape, killing, abuse and kidnapping, free from coercion such as forced migration and repatriation, forced sexual exploitation, forced enrolment into civil-military

group, and lastly free from scarcity of food, shelter, health, and livelihood (Bellamy, 2013: 345). For instance, the R2P in Kenya that is successful in preventing further mass killing. At that time, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon made a quick response toward the crisis in Kenya. He issued a statement asking the leader of Kenya to protect the civilians and to stop further atrocities. At the same time, the UN Special adviser for the genocide prevention warned the Kenyan leader if they could not provide protection, then international community would take over the responsibilities. In implementing this R2P, the UN used a diplomatic approach (Bellamy, 2010: 152; Bellamy, 2013: 498).

The last aspect of R2P is military protection. In this Syrian case, the term of protection is defined as providing secure environment. The UN peacekeepers will responsible to protect civilians from physical danger and to make sure the safety of the humanitarian actors in delivering relief (Bellamy, 2013: 347; Terry, 1998: 536). The military mission for protecting humanitarian can be seen in several peace operations in the past like in Kurds Northern Iraq (1991-1996), Bosnia (1992-95), Rwanda (1994), and Somalia (1992-1995) (Terry, 1998: 536). In Kurds the UN military was success in saving the lives of 7000 refugees and protecting the humanitarian actors and its property from attack (Sybolt, 2007: 48). In Somalia, the military work with the NGOs and other humanitarian actors in providing aid for the needy people. The UN provided a military airlift for assisting aid distribution. Besides, military force from the US, Germany and Canada worked with the World Food Program (WFP), the UN Children fund (UNICEF) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to distributed logistic from Kenya to Somalia (Sybolt, 2007: 54). The existence of military in peace operation is very important. This is also applied in the case of Syria in which there are many warlords that can endanger the life of civilians and threaten the work of humanitarian actors.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of R2P in Syria is an important aspect to protect civilians and to prevent further atrocities. One of the reasons to do this is the escalation of the conflict including the chemical weapon attack that caused a large number of people died and million people displaced. Although there are many debates regarding the notion of R2P such as the issue of sovereignty, the military intervention and motives of the participating countries, in Syrian case it follows the principles of R2P which concern more on the human security and assisting these people in need. Meanwhile, the purposes of the military intervention are to provide secure environment for both civilians and humanitarian actors working on the ground, therefore, the distribution of aid will work well. Furthermore, the roles of Muslim communities would also significant to deal with the humanitarian issues; they should take actions for protecting people from further harmed and abused as well as killing either by the government military or armed insurgents groups.

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